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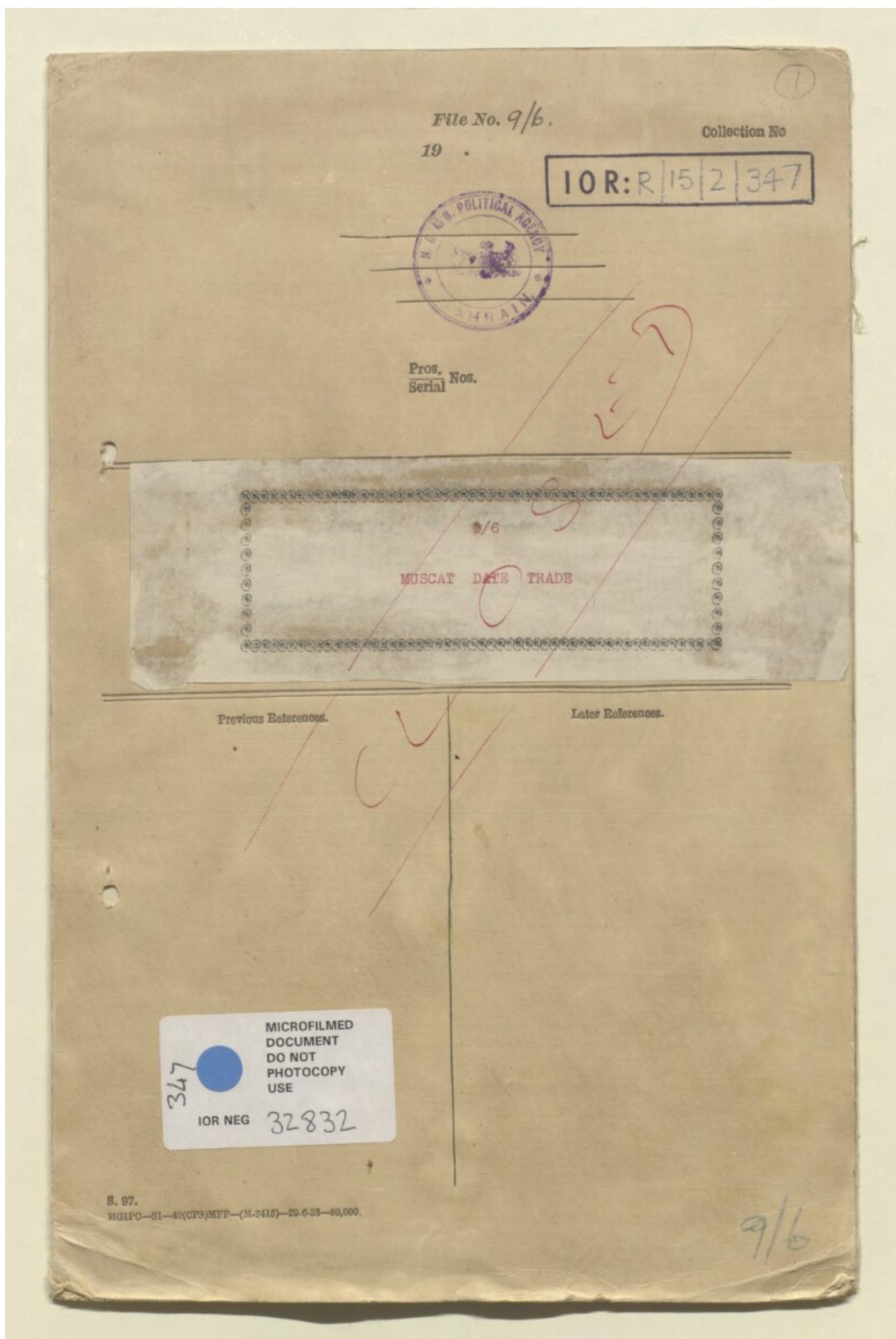
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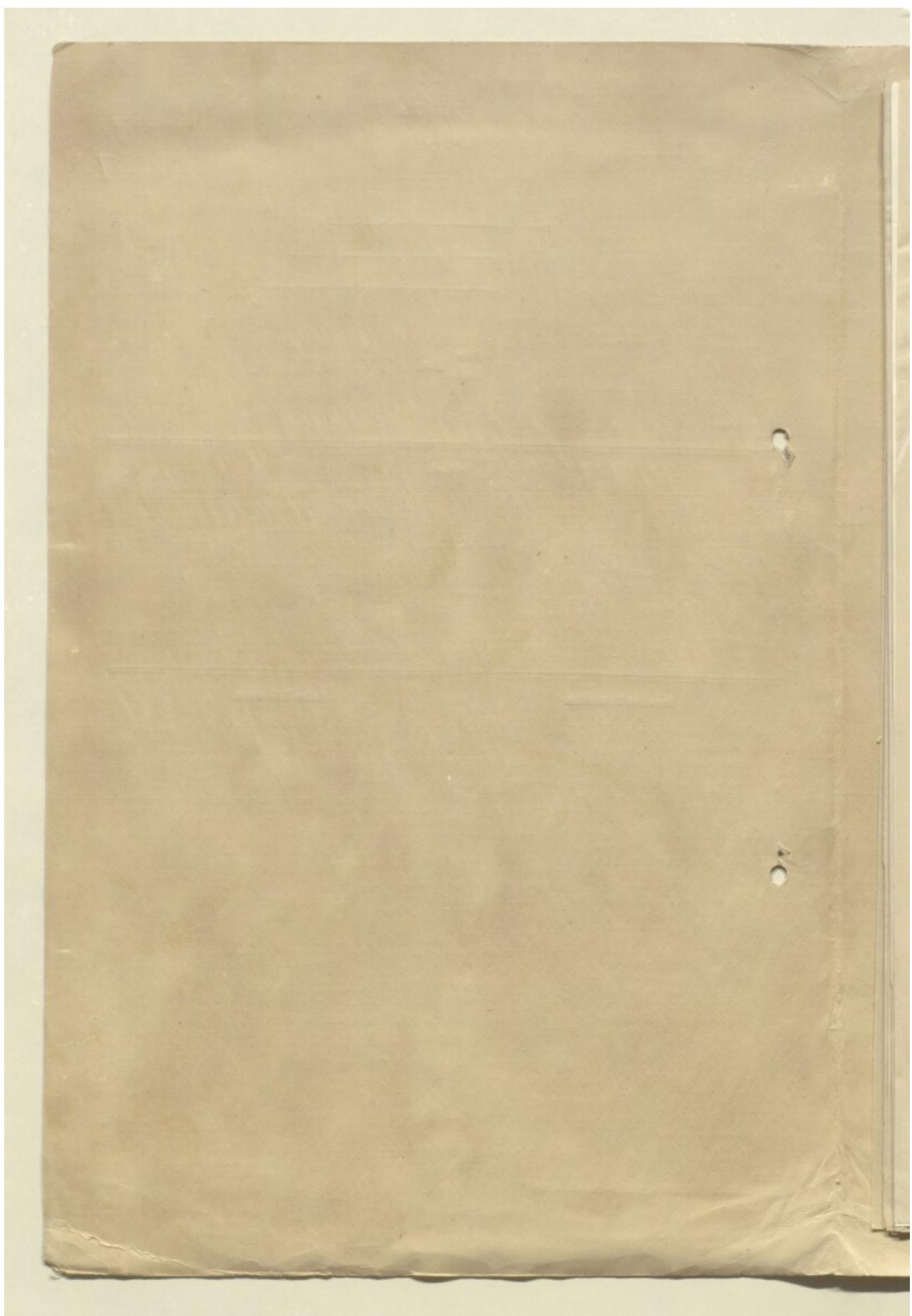
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Reference	IOR/R/15/2/347
Title	'File 9/6 Muscat date trade'
Date(s)	29 Dec 1928-25 Jul 1931 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 file (21 folios)
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About this record

The file contains a copy of a letter sent by the British Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, regarding the date trade in Muscat. The letter encloses copies of letters forwarded by the Political Agent at Muscat on the cultivation of dates in the Persian Gulf, including a section of the report written by Mr Dawson of Basra 'on the Fauna, Flora and Geology of the parts of the Batinah visited by him in 1927' (folios 12-22).







Confidential.

No. D. O. T. (B) 2. S. 1/526

British Residency & Consulate-General,

Bushire, the 25th July 1931.



Bahrain

(2)

Sir,

I have the honour to forward to you herewith

1. D.O. letter dated 20th October 1928 from Mr. Dawson to Major G.P. Murphy, Muscat.	copies of correspondence as noted in the margin, regarding the possi-
2. D.O. letter dated 8th November 1928 from Major G.P. Murphy, Muscat to Mr. Dawson, Basrah.	
3. D.O. letter dated 29th December 1928 from Mr. Dawson to Major G.P. Murphy, Muscat.	
4. Mr. Dawson's report on Date cultivation.	

bilities of extending the Muscat Date Trade, exchanged between Major G.P. Murphy, X.A., then Political Agent, Muscat, and Mr. Dawson, a member of the American firm of Hill Brothers, and one of their date experts in Iraq, and the latter's report.

2. These letters speak for themselves. While it is true that no active steps would appear to have been taken by Mr. Dawson's Principals, as yet, to make a more thorough investigation of the possibilities of the Muscat date market there is no assurance that they may not at some time in the future approach the Muscat Government with a view to obtaining a concession in this area so soon as an improvement in world trade makes it worth their while to do so. In this connection the recent appearance of the

American ...

His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs in the Department of
Overseas Trade,
London.

Mr. O'Brien





(3)

-2-

American Silver Line in the Gulf, mainly it is understood with relation to the 'Iraq date export trade, may not be without significance.

3. The undesirability from the point of view of British interests, both political and commercial, of the acquisition by any large foreign firm of a concession on the Arab coast of the Gulf requires no emphasis and I feel that all possible steps should be taken to guard against such an eventuality.

4. As far as I am aware the only important British firm in this region likely to be able to exploit the possibilities of the Matineh date gardens are the Mesopotamia Farsia Corporation. This firm have an Indian representative at Muscat, but I doubt whether they fully realise the possibilities of the Matineh date crop. I therefore suggest that, if you see no objection to this course, the matter should be brought to the notice of the Corporation's Directors in London, and in particular to Mr. G. Wills (Gray Dawes & Co. Ltd., 122 Londonwall Street, London).

5. I am sending copies to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India and the Political Agent, Muscat.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

Attested.
J. C. W. Fowle.
Under Secy. to the Pol. Resident
to the Persian Gulf.
25.7.31

sd/- T. C. W. Fowle, Major,
Officiating Political Resident in the Persian
Gulf,
Gulf and H. B. M.'s Consul-General for Persia,
etc.



W. H. D. B.
J. M. D.



Done

(4)

Copy of B.O letter from Mr. Dawson of Basra dated
October 26th 1928 to Major G.P.Murphy, I.A., Muscat.

—

This date season has been more than ordinarily difficult for us, and though it is premature yet to say that we have come out with a loss, I certainly do not think that there has been much profit in it. I peg away telling my elders and betters that we ought to open in Muscat in a large way; but I fear my pearls of wisdom are wasted. However, I shall be at home next year, and hope that personal interviews may have more emphasis than letters. All this by the way, please treat as between ourselves.

Now in order that I don't make a mistake, I wonder whether it would be trespassing on your kindness too much, if I were to ask you to confirm what I propose saying, namely, that along the coast north of Muscat there is an unbroken line of date palms, 100 miles along, and of a width averaging two or three or even 400 yards. Secondly, about half as many palms again as there are in this Batinah are to be found in the interior valleys and canes, distance anything from a few hours to a few days journey. Thirdly, that the prices of dates are cheaper in Muscat than in Basrah. This year, the average price in Basrah for the commonest variety, Sayir, has averaged Rs.250/- a karah, and the price of the choicest of the big commercial varieties, Hallawi, is Rs.600/- a karah. This corresponds to Rs.103/- a ton and Rs.247/- respectively. Fourthly, it would be possible to load ocean-going steamers from a jetty constructed at Ghubrah or Suhar or some other village in the Batinah. Fifthly, that there would be no political or other particular difficulty to overcome in the

establishment ...



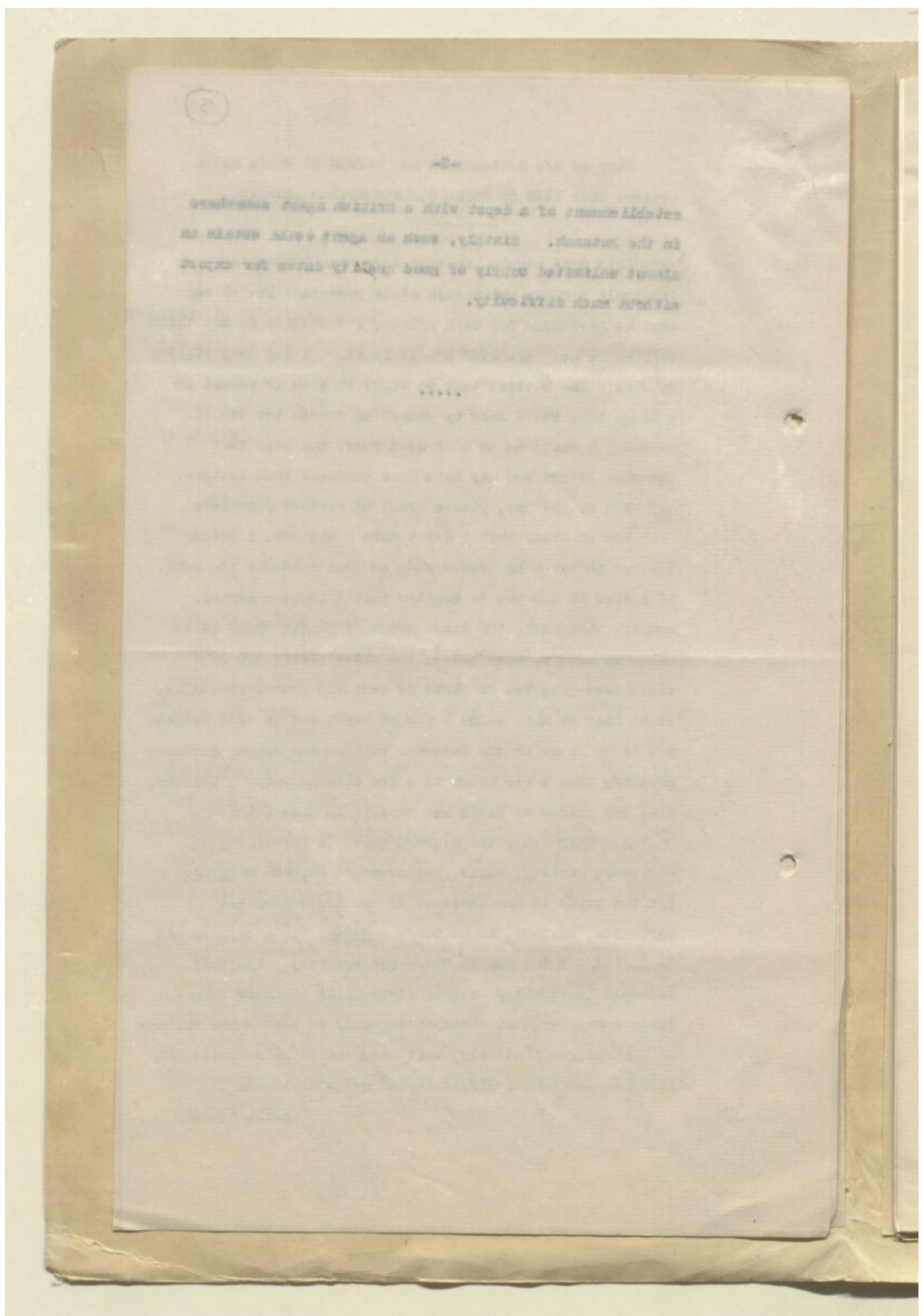


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establishment of a depot with a British agent somewhere in the Batanah. Sixthly, such an agent could obtain an almost unlimited supply of good quality dates for export without much difficulty.

.....





(6)

Muscat,

8th November 1928.

Dear Dawson,

I agree with you about the possibilities of extending of the Muscat trade in dates and certainly if your firm don't do so someone else will do so eventually.

As you know, the date tree is found in all parts of the Omani Sultanate and flourishes even at an altitude of over 2000 feet.

The chief areas are Batinah, Wadi Seemail and Sharqiyan. The Fard is grown chiefly in Seemail. The Mibsal is the principal one in Badiyah and Sharqiya whence it is exported through Sur by dhow to Bombay.

In the Batinah, the plantations form an almost continuous belt, sometimes 7 miles deep, along the coast. The belt is at least 120 miles long. There is no question about the length but I have been unable to trace any reliable authority regarding its average depth.

The great valleys on the seaward slope of western Hajar all traverse the Batinah on their way to the sea, but their courses within the limits of the Batinah are often ill-defined and in some cases their channels are so broken up and dispersed as to render uncertain the point at which they reach the sea. It is probably in the lower reaches of these wadis that the belt reaches its greatest depth. In the valleys themselves, the date palms are grown on terraces.

At Masnah, the groves belonging to the place are 2 to 3 miles deep. Muladah is 7 miles inland south west of Masnah. The place depends on its extensive date groves which ...





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-12-

which are divided only by a narrow wadi from those of Mashnah. This gives a depth of to the belt of at least 7 miles as quoted above from another authority.

Behind Wadah again there are 4 villages from 5 to 6 miles inland all with extensive groves.

Sugnaiq is the port for the Wadi Bani Ghafir. The upper portion of the wadi contains at least 25,000 palms amongst other crops. The lower portion is said to contain the same crops so I presume it also contains date palms though I do not know the number.

Khaburah is the port for the Wadi Hawasineh, Qusaf, one hour inland, contains extensive groves, though I cannot say whether these are contiguous with those of Khaburah. At least 9 places in the Wadi Hawasineh have extensive groves.

At Baham, the dates of the place are estimated at about 30,000 but dates are grown in terraces in the Wadi Ahim and Wadi Bhanik behind it.

At Sohar, the Batinah date belt is about 3 miles deep,

On the other side of the Hajar range, at Ibri, there is an extensive date grove, stated by one authority to be the most extensive in Oman with the exception of Semail (presumably also excluding the Batinah, which is not in Oman proper).

At Barimi, some of the best varieties of dates are grown, including Fard, Khalas and Mibali but they are not held in equal estimation with those of Semail and Badiyah. The palms are said to number about 60,000.

The breadth of the date belt along the Batinah is governed by the distance inland at which it is economic to work wells by the primitive methods at present in use. The wells are 15 to 20 feet deep. I dare say that with more modern methods of pumping water could be obtained economically at a greater distance from the coast thereby enlarging the area.





8

-3-

The above data which are from reliable sources in my records are as near as answer as I can give you to questions 1 and 2. I think personally that you have underestimated the number of palms.

Thirdly, as regards prices, I enclose a list I have received from the customs which you can compare for yourself.

Fourthly, you could need expert technical advice to answer this question. Shumal storms in the latter part of the cold weather sweep this coast and I think would wash away anything but the strongest construction. However a track has been made by the Muscat Infantry from Matrah through Bosher to Sib (avoiding the pass and the soft sand on the beach) and I have been so far as Sib in my car. I have not tried going further as yet but a Ford car has been as far as Sehar and I understand there are no obstacles.

Fifthly, there could not be political difficulties if the matter were approached properly by the right kind of man but the Arab is naturally suspicious and if you started by building a pier he may think you have other motives and resent it. The track to the east of Khaburah including Nasnah and Suwaik is inhabited by a troublesome tribe the "Yal Saad" but otherwise the inhabitants are harmless enough.

Sixthly, the dates are there but I do not suppose that you could build up an enormous connection such as you contemplate all at once. The Banias trade through Arab brokers to whom I believe they advance money before the production of the dates, I do not know what you could do by direct methods.

As you see, your questions have not been as easy to answer as they seemed at first sight.

signed O.P.Murphy.



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Basra, 29th December 1920.

Major G.P. Murphy, I.A.S.,
H.B.M.'s Consul and Political Agent,
Muscat.

My dear Major,

I have been very busy and delayed to answer; but a copy I sent immediately I got it to our people in New York. I have not yet their answer; but I have an answer to a previous letter on the subject; and I understand that the matter interests them, and that they are prepared to try the dates from the Batinah this next season in a small way. Probably we shall get our agents to do this for us; but, in any case, I should be glad, if you would keep this confidential, at any rate, until we can complete our arrangements.

Your letter is exactly what I was wanting. From the tiny scrap I saw, and from what I have been able to read up about the Batinah, I was convinced that it was the second biggest date garden in the world. Your letter confirms my belief. But there is still a tremendous lot to find out, before we can do anything very definite. I do not know; but I should imagine our people in New York would want to know very much more than they do at present, before they sank any money in Muscat or its vicinity. I have got some leave in April; but I have to be back again in Basrah by the end of August. I should much like to have another look at the Oman and the Coast, and think that from my point of view, the most useful time would be the end of July, when the date harvest should be begun. So

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I think I will visit Muscat then, after taking a trip down the Nile, to get a glimpse of Egypt and the Sudan. What I should like to do very much is to take a Ford along the whole length of the Batinah; but I fear that might be rather expensive. If the Company thought it worth while to pay my expenses, then I should try and do that; but, if the Company would not pay my expenses, then I should be able to afford only a donkey, and I would get as far as I could with that. I do not think I would attempt the interior; because the dates there are more scattered, and because of the political difficulties. You, I expect, will not be in Muscat in July, but if you could leave a word with the nice old Wali of Mutrah that you would be obliged, if he would give me one of his scalliwags as a guide and give me his blessing, then, I think, all would be well.

I heard yesterday that there is now a word agent in Muscat. Is that so? and, if so, what is his name, that I may get into touch with him? How does one manage for petrol along the Batinah? ____ carry it with one? That should not be difficult. It would mean lugging along about five tins, I suppose.

You are no doubt familiar with Major Gill's note on Malaria in Muscat. I read it when it was first published; but, when I wanted to reread it a little while ago, I found it was out of print in England. But I got a copy from India, and it has just arrived. His description of the climate is so documented, so calm, so free from exaggeration that I feel tempted to say to myself "Let the dates of Muscat steam in their own juice!"

The ...





(11)

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The accounts of the old travellers, who reported finding boiled gazelle lying on the desert do not so much make one's hair rise as Gill's figures.

What exactly are the prices in your schedule based? Are they the figures used by the Customs for estimating export duty? Or are they bazaar wholesale prices? Or are they the average of weekly prices? Or how are they obtained? I presume they are not the prices actually paid to the garden owners, which, I imagine, would be less than these. BATNI I take to be a synonym for URN: SILAL, the commonest of the latinah dates.

Would it be any more difficult to load steamers at (say) Khaburah than it is now at Matrah? In both, native craft would have to be used at lighters. Am I right in believing that the Shamal wind is rare in August and September?

Bd. DOWSON.





Section of Mr Dowson's report on the
Fauna Flora, Geology etc., of the parts
of the Batinah visited by him in 1927.

(12)

Agriculture.

The principal industry of the literal and of the interior is date growing. Wherever there be water, the date palm is grown. It is the first crop to be cultivated; the others with the possible exception of wheat and barley, follow and profit by the palm's shade.

Labour.

Colonel Miles gives the following tribes as cultivators of dates--: Bani Ali, Bani Bu Ali, Bani Battash, Al Rabus, Al Rajiyyin and Al Ibriyyin. More often than not the date gardens are the property of absentee lords. In the cases, they are generally not far absent, since most of them live in the villages which form the cases centres. In winter here also the cultivators live, though in summer they remain in the gardens. Many of the owners of Batanaah date gardens live in Muscat or Matrah or in one of the larger coast towns. A big landlord is called Hankari. Malak is not understood, but RAI'AL Mal is frequently spoken of. The actual cultivation when not carried out by the peasant proprietor, Bardhil, pl. Baradhil, a word also meaning 'a lazy fellow' is in the hands of a paid labourer, the Bidar, corresponding with the Falah of the Iraq, enjoying less security of tenure than that provided by the Taabah tenancy of that country, or the Maurisi of the Punjab. In the Wadi Samayil every Bidar receives, at date harvest one bunch of dates from each palm irrespective of the number of bunches borne. In the Batanaah on the other hand he never receives dates but nearly always money, sometimes money with food or with food and clothes. In both districts, fruit other than dates is the exclusive property of the garden owner. There must be an immense amount of pilfering however. Fallen fruit is the tenant's right. The provision of off shoots, fruit trees and irrigating cattle and the food of the latter is on the owner. Lucerne seed and that of wheat and barley are also provided by the owner who takes four-fifths of the crop from the former and nine-tenths of the crop of the two latter. Millet is usually grown on the same terms as lucerne but not invariably so. Truck and minotrops are sown with the tenant's seed and are his own property. The amount in cash which a Batanaah Bidar receives, in the cases where no food and clothes are received is about five Rialat a month. This was the commonest figure given in reply to questions, but an old man at Al 'il said he got fifty Rial a year and two younger fellows with him said they each got forty Rial. A garden near Rumais was looked after by a small boy and a young man, the former got 1 Rial a month plus food and the latter 2½ Rialat plus food. Kadhim a merry and well spoken half negro half Arab lad working in the garden of Sayyid Muhammad got 4 Rialat a month in addition to food and clothing but he seemed to be a favourite with the old man. Food is generally reckoned as being worth ¼ Rial a week. If then the average wage for a Batanaah Bidar be only 60 Rial a year as the other emoluments are the same as those of the Wadi Samayil, it might be supposed that 60 Rial is the value of one bunch of dates from every palm in the average holding of a Samayil Bidar. If one bunch per palm be equivalent with one-eighth of the crop, the total crop would be worth on this basis 480 Rial. With dates at 50 Rial a Bahar, the total production would be a little less than 10 Bahar, or 16,320 lb. This amount of dates might be produced on 163 palms or about 3 acres of garden. Actually all the Batanaah tenants appear to prefer to be paid as in the Samayil, so it may be presumed that the rate of pay is higher there and that the area of a Samayil holding is greater than suggested above. That this presumption is correct is borne out by the other, rough observations, which indicate that the Samayil holding is nearer 4 or 5 acres than 3. In the Batanaah however the area is nearer 2. In the latter district, the tenant has to raise all the irrigation water from wells. In the former, the water is



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almost entirely provided by flowing springs; consequently the cultivator can manage a greater area. In a bad year, the Samayil cultivator stands to lose. Probably here is the explanation of the high wage rate compared with the lower, but fixed and certain wage rate in the Batanah. Further the wage rate in both districts is fixed by long custom; the drought must have caused the prices of agricultural produce, including dates to rise. Hence a cultivator paid in kind would be likely to be temporarily at least better off than one receiving a money wage.

Cultivation and Implements.

The soil of the whole area is light sand. There is no clay though Palgrave mentions the existence of a single bed of pottery clay near the coast not far from Matrah. Drainage is excellent and there is no alkali land if the slight amount nowhere a rank growth of weeds and cultivation is one of the scantiest and shallowest. One who is used to an English spade smiles at the Mishah of the Iraq. He would laugh aloud and long at the similarly named implement of Oman. It indeed resembles more a weed stubber than a spade.

Plate xxv. The Mishah held by a Batanaah Cultivator.

There is no hard clay to be turned over, no sodden, baked, iron bound land to be broken up nor are any deep channels to be dug out. The chief use of the spade is to dam up the tiny water courses, in turn as each bed by irrigated.

The plough Hissa, Faddan not understood is also absurdly small and light and made of wood iron tipped. It is drawn by one cow or bull. If ploughing be by contract and there be but a small piece of land to be ploughed containing only a few palms the usual rate is 5 Fai a palm, the plough, plough animal, and labour being all provided by the Contractor. This rate is equivalent to about a Rial for an acre. Generally however if much land is to be ploughed, a bargain is struck for the whole piece.

The third implement is the MIQASS, which is similar to the long kind of MIHASHSH or MINJAL of the Iraq; this is it is long only slightly curved, toothed sickle used in the Iraq only for pruning palms, but in Oman also for cutting fodder, axis labourer reserved in the Iraq for the smaller more curved Minjas. Miqass is scissors in the Iraq.

A HIB a long chisel for separating off shoots from their parents, completes the list of agricultural implements.

THE TAWI.

In the Wadi Samail the size of a man holding is computed from the number of palms it contains. The units of area, FIEEDAN, MASHARAH, QUNALAH, JARIB, or DAUNAM, appear unknown. In the Batanaah however the garden fruit is the Tawi pl. Tawaian, so called presumably in reference to the stone built well. This is the amount of date garden watered by one single or double water hoist. Three of these, at Sib, belonging to Shaikh Rashid, were surveyed, with the following result:-

	Bearing off shoots Palms	Fruit trees	Total Palms	Total		Approx. Acres
				Off shoots	off shoots in & Fruit Trees	
A. Double	44	137	69	181	250	3.
B. Single.	13	81	22	94	116	1 2/3
C. Single.	94	0	38	94	132	8.
Average	38	54	32	92	124	1 2/3.
Reckoning A as 2-						





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This part of Sib is said to contain more fruit, trees especially mangoes than any other part of the Batanah. Hence the incidence of date palms might be expected to be low. On a walk from Sib towards Rumais, the numbers of bearing palms in various Tawīān along the road were counted roughly. They were as follows:-

D. Double Hoist 300 bearing palms.

E. Single	200	do
F. do	150	do
G. Double	300	do
H. Single	175.	do
I. do	100	do.
J. do	4	do.
K. do	60	do.
L. do	60	do.
M. Double	400	do.

Average 135.

Reckoning D, G, and M as two each.

Saiyid Saifim the Wali of Sib, considered the average number of palms in a single Tawi as 200. But this seems an over estimate. A figure nearer 100 would seem more likely with the average number of acres in the Tawi as two and the average spacing of palms 30 feet ~~xxxx~~, each way.

The same informant considered that the irrigation of the Tawi cost the owner 100 Rial a year, 60 for the Bidar and 40 for the bull; but most people considered the bull as expensive as the man. Reckoning that it costs 120 Rial a year to water and look after 100 bearing palms, and reckoning the yield per Batanah palm as 75 lb then the cost of producing dates without any charge for supervision interest on capital or for taxes works out as 0.95 cents per pound. One tenth of the gross crop is supposed to be rendered as government tax. The net return of each palm to the grower thus becomes 67.5 lb., so the cost of producing dates without reckoning anything for interest on capital or for supervision becomes 1.60 cents a pound. If the average price of dates in the Batanah gardens during the season be 40 Rial a ~~xxxx~~ Bahar, the price per pound is 1.4 cents allowing 0.34 cents between the cost and the selling price of a pound. Young mature palms of good varieties well bearing cost nothing up to 100 Rial each so perhaps a fair average price for a Tawi might be 5000 Rial. So counting nothing for supervision, the interest on invested capital in a Batanah date garden may be about 0.86% or 25.50% per Tawi per annum. from date Auxiliary crops add to this return. As noted later lucerne can be profitable. Fruit brings in something, though prices are low. Mangoes at Sib were selling at 250 for a Rial last June. Limes were selling at about the same price in the Wadi Samayil at the same time.

The water hoist used to irrigate the Tawi is of the ordinary Arabian type. The water is about 20 feet below the ground level from Ali Hil to Rumais; so probably may be at this depth all along the Batanah. The vertical supporting hoists are usually made of palm logs sawn longitudinally in two. They are strong and smooth. In other date producing centres the palm logs are the worst of building wood, for the reason that the internal fibres are loose and tear out. To plane such a log is like trying to plane a bath lufah. The water is dropped from the bucket on to a masonry collecting trough and thence led through a subsidiary bathing tank into the main storage tank. Here it remains until the Bidar has finished hoisting. He then unplugs a vent in the tank and occupies himself in distributing the water. He is drawing water from before the palest streak of dawn to sunrise, and from early afternoon to sunset. Perhaps he and his bull work about seven hours a day at this labour. In all the Batanah there must be 15000 and more men and ~~xxxxxx~~ animals so employed year in and year out.

Plate xxvi. A Water-Hoist at Sifalah.

To western ideas the wastage of man and animal.





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animal power is appalling. What of course is wanted is a crude oil, electric power station at Khaburah to supply a high voltage line the whole strength of the Batanah. There might be five main reduction station and each group of fifty Tawis could have secondary reduction station each Tawi would have a meter, a 1.5 H.P. motor a rheostat and a 1 inch centrifugal pump all built as one unit under one cover. The Bidaah would switch on the current the water would flow to him all he would have to do would be to direct the flow. Being relieved of the labour of having to raise the water, he could spend time improving the cultivation of the land and in growing cotton, ground nuts, sesame and other profitable ground crops instead of leaving the land nearly bare as now. But of course such a scheme will not materialise un under the present regime. Even in the capital Maskat a town possessing a climate considered by most visitors to be more unpleasant in summer than that of any other town in the Near East or Far East, there are no electric lights, fans or ice machines.

However what is feasible in the Batanah is the installation of either small oil engines and pumps or else mills. There is a sea breeze by day and a land breeze by night. The wells and tanks are already installed. The size of the Tawi is not too big for a wind mill to irrigate. Whatever mechanical means were employed to raise the water the stumbling block would be the capital expenditure required. However if some windmill firm were to establish itself in the Batanah and would be apt in collecting the instalments on its plants probably people could be induced to buy. Windmills are used for irrigating small area date gardens in Shaikh Oman near Aden in various places in Algeria and have been introduced recently into Bahrain and Amarah in the Iraq. However farmers do not change their ways unless compelled by economic pressure. And not always then. Nevertheless if the bigger landlords could be brought to see that their irrigation is now costing them ten times what it could cost them they might make the change. The Argentine is buying windmills at the rate of 16000 annually.

One double water hoist raises the level of the water in a tank, 200 feet by 24 feet one and a half inches in hand and hour. One single water hoist may be expected therefore to raise 375 gallons of water an hour. A half inch, centrifugal pump driven by a motor of one third horse power would raise as much. Palms are watered twice a week in the Batanah. Thus in a week each palm receives reckoning no loss by seepage and evaporation in the channels about 150 gallons of water. Were water easier to come by the palms would probably receive more and an increase in yield comparable with that of palms in the Wadi Samayil might result.

The Tawi is usually fenced round with thorns and big euphorbia(?) bushes, Shkar. Sometimes a railing is made of palms at 20 feet intervals rather reminiscent of English split chestnut fencing. To allow a passage to pedestrians but to keep out cattle a rough gate in the fence is often made of three cross pales and two uprights and once in a blosky glade where the acacias (they might have been Maak bushes) hid the palms, a stile was encountered.

Irrigation.

The water hoist, Zigrab as it is the heart providing the life blood, of the Tawi has been described already. Through out the Batanah is heard the plaintive shrieking of the pulleys. To a suggestion that the axles might be oiled the reply was that the noisy wheel was better, Ahzain. Major Cheesman had the same reply in Ruf Ruf.

Some of the gardens at Sab were located in the dry beds of the torrents. To provide for the rare occasions when these are flooded masonry dams are built across the stream beds thru the gardens. The velocity of the water is thus diminished and





and the water instead of rushing to the sea is held up and sinks into the ground irrigating the land and augmenting the sub-soil water.

In the Wadi Samayil and in other wide an seen in the interior with the exception of a little water provided by water hoists to the drier parts of the oasis all the irrigation water is from springs. The water from these springs would flow under ground and never be seen were it not that underground channels have been constructed with gradients less than those of the wadi beds above them. At a distance from the springs varying its depths and with the relative slopes of the channel and the wadi the water is brought to the surface. At this point the oasis begins, and continues until there is left no more water to irrigate the palms. Such an artificial underground water course is called Falag. In Morocco such a one is called Fugarah in Persia Qanat. Wells are first sunk in ~~xxxxxx~~ line at intervals varying from ten to thirty feet and then the connectives are established between them. The labour of constructing these channels with a crow bar as the only implement is considerable. The interior of the channel is cemented with a mixture of lime and plaster of Paris. Some the channels date from remote times probably, but new ones continue to be made. It may be that these channels are more numerous now than formerly but it is more probable that the new ones do no more than take the place of old ones dried up or filled in. In a Falag under construction at Misfah al Aliyah, a well about 20feet deep had been sunk by four men in six days.

The main channel of a big spring where it issues from the ground may be two feet wide and two feet deep. Such channels were half full in June. Small effluents are constructed and the ultimate branches in the gardens are no more than six inches wide and four inches deep. The slope of these smallest distributaries is reckoned as three fingers ab hundred cubits ~~xxx~~ or rather more than 1 in 1000. The surface channels are constructed of the same sort of cement as those beneath the ground that is of a mixture of lime and plaster of Paris. A rough foundation is first made of cemented pebbles. The lime is prepared by burning the rounded limestone pebbles which abound on the surface and just under the surface of the wadi bed and in the conglomerate of the hills. The plaster of Paris is prepared by burning a reddish earth which is widespread after this has been puddled with water and dried in the sun in cakes. Such a profusion of calcium sulphate in the soil must be particularly beneficial to agriculture, in that it neutralizes toxicity of much of the harmful chloride of the alkali metals. It is certainly a fact that date palms never seem to do so well as in well drained districts where the water is plentiful and where the soil is rich in gypsum given of course the climatic conditions are suitable. In Algeria, in the Wadi Sufar, as the French prefer to call it, the Oued Soud, calcium sulphate and water are as plentiful as in Wadi Samayil and drainage is as good, and the date palms are perhaps the only ones in the world which approach in vigour those of the Wadi al. Gypsum is known as Saruq. Jus of the Italian Gesso is not understood, nor is the Persian Gash.

Water rights are inherent in the property rights. The price of a garden is always inclusive of that amount of water to which it is entitled by custom. The customary rotation of water to the gardens is exactly adhered to and disputes which are rare are referred to the sheikh for decision. Some gardens are watered as often as every four days but the interval varies up to a maximum of eighteen days. In the gardens, which get such infrequent waterings pits are commonly dug round the palms so that the greatest amount of water may be obtained at each watering as is done in the drier gardens of the Algerian Zibar.

Dates and Date Palms:





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Plate xxix. Dead palms in the oasis of Miltqah al Aliyah, with terraced wheat land in foreground.

Almost all the palms in the oasis of Miltqah al Aliyah have died; a great many are dead in Al Amqat and some are dead in Sifalsh, Ghubrah, Klauner, Awainst, Nasas, Sarur, and Miltqah al Hadariyah.

Exodus

Plate xxx. The oasis of Miltqah al Hadariyah at the junction of the Wadi Samayil and the Wadi al Gailsh where a quarter of the palms have died of drought.

For this cause and exodus of the people to Zanzibar is said to have occurred, their livelihood in the Oman being gone.

An informant said that one male was planted to every ten females. From observation males would seem much less frequent than this. One to fifty females appeared nearer the truth.

A female palm which in any one year may not be bearing is called Mai. In the Iraq it is either so called or else Hail.

Dates of ripening.

In Matrah and Muscat on the 3rd of June there were available and had been for some days Maghal Dates half way between Khalal and Ratab. These had come from Batanaah. Unripe dates are green, when they reach full size the green colour of the skin changes to yellow or red or red and yellow. The flesh is still firm. Many varieties of dates in this stage are edible though there is still so much precipitated tanin in others that they cannot be eaten, until a later stage of ripening be reached. Dates at this stage of ripening are known as Khalal in the Iraq but as Bisir in Oman and in North Africa. Ratab dates are those which have developed beyond the Khalal stage and the flesh has softened. The dates are now syrupy and sticky. On further drying the dates become Tamar firmer and darker than the Ratab. In Oman Tamar are called Sar. Dates picked up in the Ratab stage go bad in a few days in the Tamar stage they keep for ever, if protected from insects, because of the high sugar concentration. In the Samayil on the 7th June Khalal were common and had been so far for ever a week, but they had not become to soften into Ratab. It was not until the first week in July that any Khalal were seen in in the Basrah market. These were Hailawi selling at eight annas a huqqa i. e. 6.4 c. a lb. The earliest dates in the Wadi Samayil are thus six weeks earlier than the earliest in Basrah. In the Batanaah they are probably two months earlier. It is stated that Oman has Khalal and Ratab dates for five months in the year beginning with Magal and Gash Batash and ending with the winter varieties of Khisab and Hilali. In Basrah the season is between four and five months long beginning with Braim and ending with Khasab.

Cooked Dates.

There is a great trade in cooked Bisir in the Iraq called Khalal Marbukh in Persia Kharak the Nabasi variety that which is most commonly cooked but there are many other varieties amongst which are the Batni and the Umni. The export of these cooked dates is almost all to India and they and other (Braim and Chichhab) from Basrah can be found in most North Indian bazaars.

Plate xxxi. Furnace for cooking Dates at Sifalsh. The four Pillars are designed to support a roof over the cooking pots to the left is the chimney.

Diseases.

In the Batanaah the majority boils are more or less scored with borer holes and in some cases are half eaten away.

Tetranychus. the web spinning red spider was





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with rarely met: commonly in the dry northern end of Khubar, a dense mass called Maraq was well known but no afflicted palms were seen. It was said that a honey like substance covers the date bunches and spoils them.

Yield. The yield of palms this year in the Wadi Samayil is probably twice that of those in the Shatt al Arab district. If 50lb a palm be the average yield per palm in the latter location in the former, it might be put at 100 lb and in the Batanah at 75 lb. The commonest number of spadices or fruit bunches Asqah, pl. Asaq in the Iraq Athqah and Athaq, in the Samayil was 9. The average per palm was perhaps 8. In the Batanah there were gardens where the yield appeared truly extraordinary. In some of these particular gardens no palm had less than 12 to 15 bunches and each would have weighed about 15lb. In the very best gardens of Basrah also there are palms. Hallawi which are stated to produce 150lb of fruit annually. A hundred palms such as these would produce more sugar in an acre than is produced by the same area of the finest sugar cane grown under optimum conditions. What is the total yield of dates as cooked Bisir andas Bah is a question for the solution of which data are of the scantiest. If the previously suggested figures for yield and numbers provisionally accepted than the 2,500000 palms bearing each 45 lb of dates would give a total production of about 950000 tons. But to be on the cautious side it would be as well to assume that the other valleys not seen are drier and less productive than the Samayil. that the northern end of the Batana is less flourishing than the southern and the average yield per palm over the whole country is nearer say 60 lb per palm than 50. on this basis the total production would amount to 670000 tons but a remark is appended to show that these customs house figures represent about half the actual total report. That was before the reorganization of the Maskat customs. There is a large export to the interior, if one may it, but probably greater than either the land or sea export. is the local demand. Dates enter more into the diet of the populace than they do in the Iraq since wheat and barley are not grown on a large scale and rice not at all.

Price. The price dates were selling at last year when the crop was considered short, varied in the gardens from 30 Rial a Bahar for Oman Hillam to 50 or 60 Rial for Farash and Nabab i.e. from 1c a lb to 2 last year the high Basrah prices perhaps affected the Oman market.

Packing. Khalal and Ratab were transported in circular protection made of palm from midribs tied together with palm fibre twine. These protectors are a foot long and six inches in diameter and are open at both ends. The dates are inserted and the ends plugged with palm fibres. If such a protective container is called Mishan. About 20 such containers are packed in an open long squat basket of woven palm leaflets known as marhalajah. The mouth is closed with palm fibre twine. The whole weighs about 14 or 15 Maskat Maa or about 125 lb. Two such baskets is a donkey load as 100lb. Four such baskets are camel load.

Plate xxxii. Khishali dates are usually packed Khasaf, baskets of woven palm leaflets open at the end only for the insertion of the dates. Once the dates are inside the end is closed permanently. It is in the containers such as these that dates are stored. These Khasaf are longer and flatter than those of the Iraq and hold rather more. The common sizes are made to hold 10 Maskat Maa and 30 Maskat Maa. It might be thought that the Batanah where palms are so abundant would have provided all the containers for its own dates and more, but actually there is a large import of Khasaf from the Samayil at about 8 Rials a 100 or 5c each because the leaflets of the Samayil palms are so much long wide and strong than those of the Batanah palms.

Varieties. The Barchi palm was seen at Samayil. The fronds are fine and graceful the leaflets fine long and feathery. The





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Perhaps in the Iraq, a big shoot is necessary, so that the root may be beneath the surface salt. 50 to 75% are said to survive.

Plate xxvii. Young Umm Sillah Off shoots at Sib.

These small shoots are sometimes planted in nursery beds, Qalbah, Qalbat. They are much less wrapped up as in those of the Iraq probably because winter in the Batanah and near the coast brings no frost and because in summer there is no or less tearing, raging, scorching, blasting dust laden, Iraqi Shamal the N.W. wind from the burnt up desert. The off shoots are planted nearly always in pits. Perhaps this is because the pits provide shelter, perhaps because the roots get nearer the sub-soil water but more likely it is so that the roots are buried firmly in the light soil and are anchored against high winds. Many are the palms seen supported by palm buttresses. Sometimes a palm likely to fall is held in place by a stone wall four feet high and six feet in diameter. The space between the boll and the wall is filled in with rammed earth.

On the whole planting is less regular than in the Shatt al Arab district though in some gardens, the palms are set rightly at the corners of squares. The unevenness of the land may be contributory cause of irregular planting though the same excuse does not hold for the Batanah.

The price of off shoots of most of the common varieties is twenty or thirty Fai or about 5c each; but Faradh off shoots command twice that.

Plate xxviii. Off shoots planted in pits in a garden of Faradh palms at Sifalah.

A seeding is known as Qash. In the Iraq a seeding is known as Diqalah; while in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in addition to this weed, Khalt is also used.

Manuring is practiced. Camel dung is the favourite application. Dr. Popenc states that manuring is annual. Niebuhr states that fish offal is used for manure. From what the present writer observed after the goats, cows, donkeys and as (the Greeks would say) other birds had finished with the fish, there remained very little offal. In North Africa and thru the date palm zone to Persia, the dead fronds are cut off close and distally to the swollen base. In a tears time the swollen base now hard and dry is cut off close to the trunk and used for firewood. In Oman the swollen base is not cut off perhaps because the Shumar and other trees provide anywhere abundant fuel. Similarly in the Punjab the bases are left on the palm. In California also the frond bases were not cut until recently. Some apprehension was felt when it was observed that roots were growing out of the trunks underneath the frond bases, and were pushing the latter off. From what appeared in the Wadis where roots could be found commonly found pushing off the frond bases to a height of six feet from the ground, this root product is not harmful to the palm. The frond bases once pushed off, the aerial roots dry up and drop off. The trunk is called Garidah when alive but when dead and cut up for the carpenter it is called Gardugh.

In the Iraq Gadhush is the trunk alive or dead while Jaridah is the frond midrib. Cf. the district of the Jarid in Tunisia. The frond in the Wadi Samayil is Zurah pl. Zur

The vigour of the Samayil palms is astounding. The average height is half as high again as that of the Iraqi palms fronds twenty long are common and trunks were seen which looked three feet in diameter, though they were not measured. And there are the palms which have been subjected to a nine years' draught. Many palms in the drier parts of the oases have died but not a large portion of the whole.





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The General appearance of the palm is reminiscent of the Dairi and Khadrawi of the Iraq. The fruit is somewhat spherical and juicy. The palm was not found at Al Hil.

A small date called Hatni was seen as hardly ripe Khalal in Matrah market.^{4,6,27} It is said to be exported to India as Khalal Maybukh. It is considered inferior.

Bilaq is found in Samayil and in the Batanah. The fruit stalks are orange in colour.

Birni palms are very common in Al Aliyah and less so in the Batanah. The fruit stalks are bright yellow. The date is long and thin and was still green the first week in June. It is considered a good quality date.

Bu Maring is found at Samayil and in the Batanah.

The Faradh palm is the commonest in the seven miles of the oasis of Al Aliyah Saifalah Hhubrab Khubas where it may perhaps constitute one third of the palms. It is said to be one of the three commonest at Jinjah and Khanudh, but in the Batanah it is hardly to be met with. The fronds stand well up nor bend but they are not numerous. The date is small and dark reddish brown. The stone is small the flesh firm, and the skin not easily broken. The flavour is strong. The harvest is not very early for Oman being in the early part of August near the coast but at the end of that month further inland. The date is the only one shipped to America in large quantities. This trad is old established as there are records of as many as four ships calling for these dates to take them to America in the year 18 1876. In 1884 the exports of America are first shown separately by the Custom authorities. The export however appears never to have reached 3000 tons, and the average appears to be half the amount. The total crop within a radius of two days donkey journ of Matrah probably does not exceed 3,500 tons. For 1900 the price of Faradh dates was only slightly higher than that of the other dates exported. Recently however the average export price of Faradh dates has been double the average price of the total dates exported. The American export is nowadays contained in 1 12lb boxes nine of which are packed up in case. The rejects fro the packing are shipped to India.

Plate xxxiii, Faradh palms near Al Aliyah Market. Athrab tree on right.

Hatlimi is a large palm at Samayil

Hamki dates are small.

Handbal or Qash Handbal palms grown at Samayil a in the Batanah.

Plate xxxiv. A Handbal palm at Miefah Al Aliyah. The untrimmed frond bases can be seen. On the right is a terrace wall of this excellently terraced oasis.

Hassas Palms were common to the Wadi and Batanah

Hilali palms common to both countries. It is an even later ripening date than Khabed. The quality is good.

Jabri was found at Sib.

The Khalas is an important date variety. It is common in the Wadi Samayil, but was seen in the Batanah. The palm has a bushy head. The excellent quality of the dates is everywhere recognised. The colour is fine reddish brown.

Khamari palms are the third commonest at Al Hil. The dates are early and the Khalal yellow.

The Khasab palm which is found as far north as





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Baghdad in the Iraq, is one of the four commonest varieties in Al Aliyah is common at Ghallah and is present in the Bataanah. It is said to be ~~XXXX~~ the commonest variety at Nakhal. The fronds are upstanding. The leaflets are more at right angles in the midrib than are those of the Khinaili. The whole appearance of the palm is more feathery than that of the Faradh. The palm does not bear so heavily as the Faradh, although the latter dates are more expensive. It is the latest date to ripen with the exception of Milali. The Khalal are a fine dull carmine and appearing in the groves when the other dates have long been cut are striking. Last year's Tamar were to be obtained in Matrah market this June.

Khinaili palms were found at Gallah and at Al Hil. The red Jhalal were in the Matrah market on the 4th of June. The fronds are outstanding. The leaflets are somewhat closely appressed to the midrib. The dates are said to be excellent.

There are Lazad palms in the Wadi Samayil but none were seen in the Bataanah. The dates were green early in June. The Ratab are said to be good.

The Mabasli variety is one of the four commonest in Al Aliyah, there are a few palms at Al Hil. and it is said to be one of the three commonest varieties at Khudhah. It is said that it is the commonest variety at Wadi Maawil. It can claim to be one of the leading varieties of Oman and for export. Almost the entire crop if not all is made into cooked Bisir and it is in that form that it is exported. It is a dearer date than Khasab.

The Madulki variety is found in the wadi and at Al Hil.

The Minzif was seen in the wadi and at Sib though not at Al Hil. The palm is Hallawi like with long thin fronds. The dates were still green the first week in June rather narrow and rather long.

Mizmag palms were seen at Al Hil Ghallah and many in the Wadi Samayil. There are palms called Mizmag Al Bahar and others called Mizmag Al Oman but these are thought to refer to the same variety. The Khalal are red were on sale in Matrah market on the 4th June.

Yellow Khalal called Masri were on sale at the same place on the same day.

The sagral variety is one of the commonest. There are some at Al Hil. and they are said to be common all along the Bataanah. They are said to be one of the commonest sorts at Finjah and Khudhah. They are one of the four commonest at Samayil. At Ghallah they were common. The date presents points of resemblance with the Syir of Iraq, in that it is common the Khalal are edible, and yellow and in the half Ratab dates show a very definite and distinctive line of demarcation between the apical Ratab half and the basal Khalal half.

On the other hand the Herbal dates resemble the Hallawi in size in earliness and by a characteristic white basal part of the Tamar. This white base is not noticeable in Hallawi dates when the palms on which they are borne have suffered from drought and ears from them the title Feathers of Little pores Abu Shashain, upstanding. The leaflets are more at right angles to the midrib than are those of KHINAILI. The whole appearance of the palm is more as the ~~XXXX~~ FARADH. The palm does not bear so heavily as the FARADH although the latter dates are the more expensive. It is the latest date to ripen with the exception of MILALI. The KHALAL are a fine, dull carmine and appearing in the groves when the other dates have long been cut are striking. Last year's TAMAR were to be obtained in Matrah market this June.

A few Marghili palms in AL HIL.





Plate XXXV. A Maghal Palm at Misqal at Alyah. The bases of the fronds are not cut out. In the foreground a small water fall of irrigation water descending from one terrace to another.

(22)

Masla Al Kharmak are in Al Hil and in Samayil.

Qash Ahmar is the same of a Samayil variety. The red colour of the Khalal was just beginning to show on the 7th June.

Qash Barash was seen at Samayil but not in the Batanah. In the Samayil it is the earliest date to ripen but it does not find its way into the Matrah market earliest because the Maghal of the coast are before it. The Khalal are red.

Qash Gahmili was seen at Sib. The dates were in the Khalal stage (yellow).

Qash Manzah is the second commonest date at Al Hil and is said to be very common along the Batanah. It was seen only occasionally in the Wadi Samayil. The dates were in the Khalal stage. They are almost as early as Maghal.

Qash Maiyung palms are in the Batanah and in the Wadi.

The big handsome Qash Bumail palms were encountered at Samayil at Al Hil and at Sib. The dates turn red straight from green without any yellowing and this gives them a curious appearance.

Sarki dates are cooked and exported to India.

Sarnak palms have red fruits stalks. They were seen in the Wadi and in the Batanah.

Like the Qash Bumail the dates of the Shabrut variety melt from dark green to dark red making them look dark and unusual. These Khalal are bitter but the Ratab Tamur are said to be good.

Shaham dates are reddish brown yellow Khalal at Sib early in June.

Silani dates were yellow Khalal at Sib.

Suri are said to be sent as Khalal Matbuluk to India.

Omni are said to be exported in a similar manner. Is this a trade synonym for Mahasli?

Plate XXXVI. Young Umm Sillah Palms at Sib, round each is a circle of Hillet Gnashmar.

Umm Sillah is the commonest Batanah date. If it be reckoned that one third of all the Batanah palms be of this variety to total varieties at Sib hold good for the whole tract there must be about half a million palms Umm Sillah early in June. The dates were still green. Last years' prices were from 30 to 40 R. Rial a Maher i.e. 1 to 1/3 c a pound. It is the commonest date met with in Baskets in the markets. The red Khalal of Umm Zanag were seen in Matrah. The Zibid palm is common in the Wadi Samayil and can be found at Sib. The general is suggestive of the Hallawi of the Iraq. The dates are said to be of good quality. They are small and very late.



mis to send tomorrow to MUSCAT in MUSCAT. I think it is
to the best place to be engaged and at the best time for
the purpose of getting the best gathered dates collected
at the time of the date to be sent to me.

Now according to the time of the month when
you are engaged in MUSCAT you will be able to get
the best dates.

The time of the month when the best dates are
gathered is the month of April and the month of
May and the month of June and the month of July and the month
of August and the month of September and the month of October and the month
of November and the month of December and the month of January
and the month of February and the month of March.

In the month of April and the month of May
there are dates gathered in the month of April and the month of May
and the month of June and the month of July and the month of August
and the month of September and the month of October and the month of November
and the month of December and the month of January.

Therefore when you are engaged in MUSCAT you will be able to get
the best dates gathered in the month of April and the month of May
and the month of June and the month of July and the month of August
and the month of September and the month of October and the month of November
and the month of December and the month of January.

Therefore when you are engaged in MUSCAT you will be able to get
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